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ABSTRACT

Two current trends in evaluation practice are brought together: the growth of case study in policy evaluation and the redefinition of the case boundaries to include administrative actors. One facet of their interaction is explored; that is, the confrontation that can occur when a case worker alone comes into conflict with the organization studied. Issues of the content and dissemination of information may become more then usually vulnerable to the exercise of executive power. The resulting imbalance in power relationships threatens not only the dissemination of evaluation reports, but the completion of the evaluation itself. The central point is that when case study is the mode of policy evaluation, the policies of use of data intrude into the actual study and production of evaluation reports. With the evaluation process any policy utilizing the policy managers as a more visible part of the analysis, there is a tendency to adopt qualitative methods of social enquiry, via interviewing, observing and value analysis of documents, regarding participants' judgements and perceptions as an important source of understanding the program under evaluation in action. (Author/CE)

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CASE STUDYING SUPERORDINATES:[1] THE POWER POLITICS OF POLICY EVALUATION

Paper presented to a symposium on Case Study in Policy Evaluation: Paradoxes of Popularity, American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California, 13-17 April, 1981.

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This paper brings together two current trends in evaluation practice - the growth of case study in policy evaluation and the redefinition of the case boundaries to include administrative actors - and explores one facet of their interaction: the confrontation that can occur when a case worker working alone comes into conflict with the organization studied. Issues of the content and dissemination of information may become more than usually vulnerable to the exercise of executive power. The resulting imbalance in power relationships threatens not only the dissemination of evaluation reports but the very completion of the evaluation itself. The central point I wish to underline is that when case study is the mode of policy evaluation, the politics of use of data intrude into the very process of conduct of the study and production of evaluation reports.

This central theme is located within the changing context of evaluation in the United Kingdom and is illustrated by an example in which the author, despite having cleared the first of two evaluation reports for accuracy, fairness and relevance with all the personnel involved, found that circulation of the report and, increasingly, the process of clearance of a second report became more and more subject to control by the most powerful of the actors involved.

1. I am not talking about direct portrayal of superordinates in naturalistic inquiry studies but rather case studies and activities for which powerful people are directly responsible.

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England in the last five years has witnessed a shift in evaluation from curriculum projects to the policy space in which projects are located and policy initiatives themselves. While an examination of the policy space has always been acknowledged as an important part of curriculum program evaluation it has not always been the major focus. More attention has been devoted to an examination of the policy in action and of those who implement policy at the point of delivery than of those whose antecedent actions shape the conditions of implementation.

Now the policy itself and the process of policy making has become an explicit focus and the policy managers themselves a more visible part of the analysis. Several factors have contributed to this development. First, and most obvious, are the economic cutbacks. Funding policies in the last few years have been revised by lack of funds in two particular ways. The Schools Council, for instance, the largest sponsor of curriculum developments projects in the sixties and mid-seventies, has shifted its developmental policy from classroom subject development on a large scale to program development supporting district and school initiatives with small amounts of seed money. The Social Science Research Council and the Department of Education and Science, on the other hand, have responded to the shortfall by requesting proposals that more directly feed into policy development.

More support for policy evaluation recently has come from the European Community which is now sponsoring broad policy-related programs of pilot experiments (Transition from Education to Work and Migrant Education are two of its current themes) with requirements for

evaluation built in to the granting of development money. Such programs are characterized by a strong managerial interest in demonstrating that there is value for money in the investments - an interest that does not always allow for open exploration of their merits, even when one of the espoused aims is to learn from pilot programs and inform future policy. This is sometimes manifest in pressure for specific, positive results from those who carry out the program.

The shift to policy evaluation has occurred at another level as well. Those evaluating the centre-periphery curriculum development models of the sixties came to realize that it was not only important to study the reception of curriculum initiatives in order to understand more about the process of development and change, but the policy which supported the initiatives in the first place (see, for example, MacDonald and Walker, 1976). This may seem an obvious point (and with hindsight one which perhaps should have been taken into account earlier) but it needs to be placed within a history of evaluation in the United Kingdom which is comparatively recent (at the most the last fifteen years).

Formal curriculum evaluation (excepting Her Majesty's Inspectorate inspections and surveys) barely existed before the advent of national curriculum projects and in evaluating these, most evaluators focussed initially upon classroom usage and subsequently upon the dissemination of new practices. It was only when the curriculum reform movement began to attract a bad press that the search for explanations of failure or lack of take-up in the schools forced a redefinition of the object of scrutiny.

At the same time as making this shift in substantive focus, evaluators retained their commitment to the naturalistic enquiry approaches which characterized their earlier work. While these took many forms, typically they produced accounts of the unfolding of educational programs in context portraying specific decisions and actions of participants within a case study format. In presenting a close-up account of the program in action they tended to adopt qualitative methods of social enquiry - primarily interviewing, observing and value analysis of documents - regarding participants' judgments and perceptions as an important source of understanding the program in action. Representing the different value perspectives fairly was an aspiration, and procedures were developed to negotiate clearance of data obtained from individuals and groups for wider circulation.

The problem which I am exploring in this paper is a function of the confluence of the two trends raised above - the changing substantive evaluation focus from curriculum programs to policy initiatives and the increasing allegiance to naturalistic forms of inquiry, particularly the case study, by evaluators.

As long as the focus of case studies was confined to relatively powerless program actors, evaluators were able to construct, write and publicize close-up accounts of program activities without encountering insuperable or even well-organized opposition from those whose work came under scrutiny. Typically these were school practitioners - administrators, teachers, pupils or local district advisers - subordinates in a hierarchically organized system. Incompetencies or difficulties revealed by the evaluation, even if they threatened or were

perceived to threaten people's livelihood, were not often challenged by them. Most evaluators were sensitive to the need to protect vulnerable subjects from the consequences of exposure, employing the device of anonymity where the risks seemed to warrant it and, increasingly, the practice of negotiation with them over the content and release of reports (Norris, 1977; Simons, 1980). This latter practice has developed partly in response to an increasing recognition of the need to engage participants in the evaluation process and give them some control over the way in which their perspectives and judgments are portrayed. It also helps to counter deficiencies in the anonymity convention in research reporting. In case study, anonymity is difficult, if not impossible to achieve. The case is identifiable, of course, to those within it and often, depending upon the detail of the case, to those beyond it. While it may be a useful aspiration to protect the identities of people over time and distance (see, for example, Smith, 1980), it becomes less useful the more public the institution is or the farther up the hierarchy one proceeds.

With the shift to policy level studies and the tendency of case study approaches to depict policy in terms of what particular policy makers say and do, evaluators found themselves operating within a different set of power relationships and, moreover, with resort to anonymity virtually excluded by the greater identifiability of the subjects. Not only are the policy makers and executives a more powerful group of actors and more skilled in dealing with threats to their security, they are also more likely to resent and resist evaluative scrutiny. This has been manifest in attempts to dismiss, edit or suppress evaluation

reports. (MacDonald and Jenkins, 1980; Simons, 1979-80). Confrontation results as the evaluator, in turn, attempts to maintain the right to portray policy processes to audiences within and beyond the program.

Instances of confrontation are now being reported in England at national level (Jenkins, 1980) and at the local level as well (Simons, 1979-80), as local district administrators and policy makers seek to protect their record against evaluative scrutiny. All of these cited studies have run into difficulties with national or local executives responsible for program design and management. Tactics employed have included delay, dismissal, criticism of evaluator, refusal to comment and, where these have not worked, the claiming of ownership of the report and/or refusing to publish or support dissemination.

Conflicts between case study evaluators and their subjects are not new of course, but some recent confrontations have generated more hostility than we have been accustomed to expect and clearly reflect the greater power of superordinates to defend their interests. Previously in curriculum implementation studies such problems have been minimized by the differential power positions enjoyed by researchers and researched. (See, for example, Sharp and Green, 1975.) Researchers have always been more powerful than the school practitioner community when it comes to publishing or otherwise reporting their investigations.

The changing circumstances brought about by a policy focus underline a political weakness peculiar to case study. It is now generally agreed by experienced practitioners of the approach that case study is best conducted by one person, although Denny (1978) is one of the

few to have written about it. Both the complexity of processing and the need for coherence of style and content require that it be a one person task. Certainly in the United Kingdom it is the prevalent practice to assign one person to a case rather than attempt a composite study even when a team is available. (See, for example, the designs of the SAFARI and UNCAL studies and the Cambridge Accountability Project.) Parsimonious funding policies reinforce this pattern by typically providing for only one full-time evaluator.

The case, on the other hand, usually involves a number of individuals organizationally linked through hierarchical relationships. Some of these individuals may want the evaluation story told, some may not. But the hierarchical arrangement means that opposition to an evaluation that may begin with one individual can quickly escalate into a unified organizational opposition that places the evaluator working alone in an impossible position having to complete the evaluation, defend it and sometimes argue for its dissemination as well.

In practice it becomes very difficult for one person to defend the evaluation and protect its independence in the face of sustained and organized opposition. This is so even when the case study is issue-oriented, focussing on persons only indirectly to reflect the origins and shaping of the policy in action. It is easy to see how people can object to highly personalized accounts detailing particulars of individual's lives even if they accept the assumption that if individuals make policy such details are potentially relevant, but the point I wish to make here is two-fold. First, even when evaluation reports are not highly personalized, they may be perceived as personal or critical

if people feel threatened or are uncertain about their actions. Secondly, the case study may be perceived to be a personal account because it is conducted by one person. In the face of opposition which can quickly accelerate within and between institutions the case study worker is outnumbered and can be overpowered.

The differential in power relationships is often exacerbated by a differential in resources. Evaluations in the United Kingdom are typically under-resourced. Any extra resource backing provided by the academic institution - the base from which evaluators usually work - more often than not fails to match the back-up resources of the institution studied, putting the evaluator at an even further disadvantage in contesting a decision by a powerful subject group within an organization to suppress an evaluation report. In this context also one advantage of working in academic institutions - the freedom of individuals to pursue their own lines of inquiry - can become a disadvantage. The process of marshalling support for individual action is not a familiar process in colleaguial academic institutions, and this stands in contrast to the way in which hierarchical organizations can be mobilized by their most powerful members to generate support and compliance for a particular policy or line of action.

What follows is a description of how an independent case study policy evaluation that was acknowledged by all the individuals involved - administrators, teachers and project personnel - to be a fair, accurate and relevant account of a policy in action became increasingly subject to bureaucratic control when it came to dissemination of the evaluation report beyond the immediate program and district personnel.

The context was this. For two years the author was the external independent evaluator of a pilot project in teaching mother tongue and culture to two ethnic minorities within the school curriculum in one school district in England. The pilot project was one of several in different member countries sponsored by the European Community as part of a larger program for the Education of Migrant Children. Funding in this particular instance was direct from the European Community to the local district education authority and not through central government Department of Education and Science.

The pilot project had been underway for more than a year when the evaluator was asked by a College of Teacher Education (which had been approached by the local district) to provide an external evaluation for the remainder of the project's life - at that time twenty months.[1]

External evaluation was expected and requested by the European Community as a condition of support, but no money was earmarked for it. Responsibility for financing and securing an external evaluation lay with the local district. Earlier attempts by the district to secure an external evaluator had not been successful, though the College had provided a consultant for six weeks. The finance eventually found allowed for only a part-time evaluation, approximately one day a week of evaluator time with minimal secretarial help.

There was, crucially, no formal contract, only a letter recording the administrative and financial arrangements between the evaluator, the College, and the local district. This letter did however state that

1. At the time of the evaluator's appointment the project was expected to terminate at the end of a three year span. Subsequently this was increased to four years. The evaluator was asked by the local district to continue to be the external evaluator but declined.

the College would retain copyright of the two evaluation reports. The project was exploring a controversial area and both the College and the evaluator thought it necessary to assert academic control of the evaluation from the outset. (Early English reaction to the European Community's Directive on Mother Tongue Teaching, due to come into force in 1981, had not been favourable.) At the same time the evaluator took the further step of asking an experienced evaluation colleague to act as consultant adviser for the period of the assignment.

Following a preliminary discussion with the two district officials most concerned with the project (a professional adviser and senior manager), and before accepting the assignment, the evaluator wrote a two page statement summarizing the approach, purposes and aims of the evaluation. This was forwarded to the College and local district, and subsequently discussed at a meeting with project personnel and heads of the schools involved in the project. Reaction was favourable.

During the next nine months the evaluator gradually traced the development of the project and documented the early experience of those involved through interviewing key personnel at district, project and school level, observing project meetings on and off site and studying documents relevant to the setting up and development of the project. Access to both people and documents was negotiated and individuals were told at the time that they would have the opportunity to check the fairness, accuracy and relevance of any information offered that was identifiable to them if it was utilized in the evaluation report. The exact procedures followed and the step by step process of clearance are documented fully in the Appendix to this paper.

It is important to note that this period was characterized by prolonged conflict, of people and ideas, within the project under study, and that much of this conflict was concerned with managerial rather than classroom decision-making. This not only affected the balance of content for the evaluation, it made the process of clearing data both more important and more time-consuming. One day a week was grossly inadequate. Many times the evaluator felt like giving up (since it seemed impossible to cope procedurally with the internal stresses within it) but felt bound to see the task through.

By the eleventh month the evaluator began the process of clearance of the first report in preparation for a phased dissemination plan: first, to those most closely involved and clearly identifiable even in role; secondly, to those involved in the project but less identifiable (i.e. general classroom teachers); thirdly, to sponsoring groups and other local schools and teachers not directly involved; and lastly, to other 'interested parties' beyond the immediate program (i.e. parents, bi-lingual and multi-cultural communities and organizations and the evaluation/research community.

The actual process of clearance involved several stages itself (detailed in the Appendix) but essentially was based on the principle that those people most closely reported upon and most identifiable should have the opportunity to check their comments first individually and to amend or add to their statements on the criteria of fairness, accuracy and relevance. They should, secondly, have the opportunity to comment on their <u>own</u> comments in the context of the whole report. These procedures took several months to work through, the managers indicating in the fourteenth month that they wished to prepare a statement for inclusion. Two months later they had changed their mind.

The following month, by now the seventeenth month of the twenty month period of evaluation, the draft report (already revised to take account of individual's comments) was discussed at a project meeting of local district officials, heads of project schools and project teachers. The evaluator offered to discuss with the meeting the groups to whom the report would be circulated in the final dissemination phase, but was told by the chairman (manager) that he had understood the issue was settled. In any case it was not considered appropriate by him to discuss further distribution then.[2]

Immediately after the meeting he asked the evaluator into his office and suggested that the Report be restricted to the groups to whom it had already been circulated. In support of this recommendation he said that the local district was not aware of the evaluator's intention to disseminate the report more widely; that the local district thought that control lay with them, not the evaluator; that not enough time was allowed them to respond to the Report (they needed to know three months in advance, for instance, that a response would be sought); that the usual convention of anonymity would be difficult to employ in this report; that they were concerned that wider circulation would mean publication; that wider circulation might raise disputes between individuals and or raise political troubles with teachers, and that they had discussed the issue of confidentiality with teachers who were operating on the understanding that the report would have restricted circulation.

The evaluator reiterated that the evaluation was external and independent with a responsibility to inform those who had a 'right to know' about the issues and outcomes of a publicly-funded program (this did not

mean general publication); that over the past few months key personnel had had ample opportunity to clarify, add or amend their statements (and had agreed the report was a fair account of what transpired); that the evaluator had specific agreements about confidentiaility and clearance with the teachers which had been worked through particularly thoroughly, taking into account the difficulty of anonymising people; that the intention to disseminate to groups beyond the immediate program was noted in the initial statement they had received; that the local political difficulties to which he referred had nothing to do with the dissemination of the report.

Not wishing to be co-opted or collusive in 'understanding' the local difficulties but neither wishing to pursue further dissemination without participant support, the evaluator suggested a future meeting was necessary to resolve the issue. The evaluator also thought it appropriate to discuss the issue with her consultant whom she would bring to the next meeting if that was acceptable to the local district.

No date could be found in the local manager's diary until approximately one month later (by now the eighteenth month of the evaluator's twenty month assignment). By this time the positions of both the local district and the evaluator had hardened, and the meeting ended in impasse. The local district manager had been briefed by his boss and argued a narrowly legalistic interpretation of the agreement while the evaluator maintained the right to disseminate the report.

At issue were the following points:

- the local district had presumed that the report would be available only to local professional participants and sponsors whereas the evaluator assumed the right to report to 'interested parties', an

evaluation goal specified in the initial statement of intent. Much of the dispute turned upon competing interpretations of the concept of 'interested parties'; with the evaluators contending that even a parsimonious interpretation could not justifiably exclude those parents who had volunteered their children for the pilot project. But the district managers remained adamant that the report not be made available to parents.

- a basic conflict over control of the report; the local district assumed that the evaluator had provided a paid service on behalf of the College of Education solely for the district paymasters. The evaluation took the view that 'you can sponsor an evaluation but not buy it'.
- related to this issue was a difference that transpired over the meaning of independence. The local district held that independence meant independence of view, not of action, whereas the evaluation stressed it meant both.
- a basic conflict over confidentiality agreements; the local district revealed (belatedly and without evidence) that they had given an undertaking to the teachers at the outset of the project that their privacy would be respected and dissemination of any resultant reports would be restricted, whereas the evaluator had engaged in extensive confidentiality agreements and clearance of data with teachers on the understanding that the report would be more widely circulated. The evaluator did not know of the agreement between the local district and the teachers. Had she done so she would not have taken the evaluation on since it effectively undermined the very concept of an inde-

pendent external evaluation. In any case it did not seem reasonable to claim a report cleared through extensive negotiations under a blanket guarantee of confidentiality offered by the local district.

Time was passing, patience wearing thin. The fact that the local district had now had four months to comment while the report was held up received no acknowledgement from the local district, nor did the offer by the evaluator to update events and locate the report within a sympathetic treatment of the problems of innovation. The central issue, in summary, was one of control over dissemination and the fact of the matter was that the prolongation of the dispute favoured those who were against dissemination. At no stage in the discussion was the fairness and accuracy of the report in dispute. The local district negotiator agreed that the account was a fair record of what happened.

Failing to reach any resolution the suggestion was made that the College, as main contractors, be informed and invited to state where they stood on the issue.

There followed over the next six months (and well beyond the period of evaluation) a series of letters between the superintendent of the local district, the senior administrator of the College of Education and the evaluator's consultant trying to resolve the dispute.

The evaluator was still involved in evaluating the work of schools attempting to complete a second report under increasing pressure from the local district to meet the delivery deadline. The formal period of the evaluation was over and a second report expected. This proved very difficult to do given the time that was taken up in negotiation and the uncertainty that prevailed over the fate of the first report. Clearly by now any time the evaluator devoted to dissemination of the first report and completion of the second would be spare time over and above commitment to a full-time university teaching position.

The local district emphasized to the College promises they had made to the teachers and sought the College's support for restricted circulation. The College, in effect, agreed with them (after pointing out that none of the three parties had clarified the independence of publication of the report at the outset) stating that the rights of the participants should be safeguarded (this included the right to control the use to which accounts are put) and that if wider circulation was proposed the approval of every individual consulted would be needed and opportunity provided to reply.

This was precisely the process the evaluator had been through (though not giving veto for total control to any one person) and the thought that the process might need to be repeated created a feeling of despair reinforced by the fact that there were now two organizations to contest freedom of reporting with, including the one which had underlined the independence of the evaluation at the outset and on whose behalf the independent evaluation was being conducted. The

evaluator's consultant challenged the College pointing out that participants' rights had been protected and rigorous procedures followed, but to give complete control to participants over dissemination of reports would fatally undermine both research practice and public reporting. Final power to suppress publication of course lay with the College who held the copyright. The consultant suggested that the College was misusing its copyright if it intervened to curtail dissemination and promised the fullest publicity should it decide to take this stance.

Finally the College convened a meeting between the local district, themselves and the evaluators to try to resolve the impasse. A date was reached in the twenty-third month (i.e. three months after the formal evaluation period had ended). Time and space prevent detailing the issues discussed at the meeting but a resolution was reached. The decisions were as follows:

- that copies of the evaluation report would be made available, distributed by the College, to a list of people and groups, including Local Education Districts with similar concerns, representative ethnic organizations, research libraries, and academics with a substantive or methodological interest in the study. The list was to be agreed between the evaluator, the College and the local district.
- that a copy of the report be lodged in the participating schools and steps taken by the local district to make the report accessible to the parents of the pupils involved in the project.
- that the evaluator was free to draw upon the experience of the study in contributions to the literature and development of

her professional field whilst maintaining the anonymity of the material.

- that the evaluator write again to the participating heads and teachers informing them of this dissemination plan and asking if they wished to add any further comments on the same principles as before.

The resolutions were a compromise.

These decisions were reached at the very end of a two hour meeting. Significant factors which led to a resolution included the recognition

- that an internal evaluation existed as well as an external one, thus offering counter balance;
- that in order to establish copyright copies of the report had to be placed in copyright libraries, a requirement compelling some degree of dissemination and public access;
- that parents were perhaps a less problematic audience than the elected officers of the district, who had not thus far been informed of the dispute;
- that an international meeting was shortly to be held to discuss the work of the project, and that this would guarantee a more extensive circulation of the evaluation findings than the district had so far contemplated.

The dispute was then resolved but the resolution itself generated more work for the evaluator. As part of the resolution the evaluator was asked to write again to the participants informing them of the intention to circulate the report more widely and seeking further comments in the light of this. This was done the next day and further time allowed for people to respond and the evaluator to update and

adjust the report accordingly. It was finally cleared for agreed circulation thirteen months after the first negotiations began. Meanwhile the evaluator was under increasing pressure to complete the second report for the international meeting. Though aware of the time pressure, the evaluator wished to proceed on the same clearance principles as before with the teachers. Details of what actually happened are documented elsewhere (Simons, 1979-80) but significant for the theme of this paper is the fact that the local district resumed its interference in the evaluation process, attempting to wrest control of the second report by directing teachers to respond to the district office rather than to the evaluator. Again the evaluator had to call upon the consultant to take issue with the district superintendent, whose staff were by this time persistently making unreasonable demands for delivery whilst at the same time impeding the completion of the report.

In the end circulation of the evaluation reports to groups beyond the program did not take place until two years after the initial negotiation for clearance of data began.

Conclusion:

The idiosyncrasy of this particular case should not be allowed to distract attention from its generalizable features, echoed in the recent experience of other U.K. evaluators. MacDonald and Norris (1980) are among those pressing the argument that evaluators of educational policy initiatives should devote more attention to executive roles and performances in the management and generation of policy. But the reporting of executive action is vulnerable to the superior capacity of the powerful to mobilise effective resistance to efforts which undermine their boundary control and their image management.

It may be argued that in this particular case the evaluator was at fault in not making crystal clear to all the participants the reporting goals of the study, and in not insisting on a formal contract enshrining these goals. That is certainly true; ambiguities of language added to the possibility of genuine misunderstanding. Nevertheless few of us surely believe that the root of the problem is a kind of misunderstanding which could be eliminated by more precise prespecification. The fact is that at the point of negotiation of an evaluation those who are potentially vulnerable to its findings are typically scaling the peaks of optimism regarding the outcome of their activities. They anticipate favourable publicity rather than embarassing exposure from the evaluation reports. Despite the rather dismal record of educational innovation over the past two decades innovators continue to embark on new initiatives on a wave of confidence even when

they lack experience and expertise. It is only when cracks appear, when the project runs into difficulties, when their efforts to grapple with unexpected complexities lay them open to charges of at best naivete, at worst incompetence, that they begin to look seriously at an evaluation study which is documenting their experiences for professional and public consumption. I would contend that at that point even a watertight contract stipulating independence of reporting is likely to be contested, and that such a challenge is likely to feature the forms of reaction that characterized the case I have described.

Again it might be argued that in this case, and perhaps more strongly in cases where the rights of the evaluator are not clouded by uncertainty, the evaluator should simply ignore the protests and go ahead with dissemination of the study. This raises the question of whether we, as evaluators, have responsibilities beyond the study in hand. I would argue that we have, and that one responsibility is to promote in a general sense the acceptability of access to schools for the evaluation community. This means that in circumstances of conflict the evaluator has a responsibility to adhere to reasoned persuasion rather than resort to unilateral action, even if this entails, as it did in this case, some loss of dissemination, and a considerable delay in circulation of the report.

Reasoning takes time and effort away from completion of the evaluation. The case I have described is one where, as the dispute developed, the local district gradually moved from a single representative, providing a manageable person to person negotiation, to an organization posture involving the evaluator in multiple interactions with district person-

nel who had no power to make decisions, and from verbal to written interactions, a time-consuming and protracted process. Where such disputes occur a small evaluation works from a very weak resource base compared to an organization able to marshall human resources from its normal administrative flexibility. It is difficult to see how an evaluator can match this capability at the point of need; such assistance must be anticipated and built into the design and funding of evaluation studies from the outset.

What other solutions are there? Tightening of contracts has been proposed. While appreciative of the need for written agreements to clarify and specify the roles and goals of the evaluation, they cannot, as already indicated, take account of all events or the specific difficulties which may arise in any one program evaluation; it is only as these difficulties emerge that people are persuaded of the inadequacies in the contract. Elsewhere I have written about the dangers of relying upon too legalistic a contract (Simons, 1980).

Consultant involvement throughout the study is extremely useful as I've indicated and more institutional back-up for evaluators seems essential. These solutions apply to most evaluations however. What I wish to propose here are two solutions that seem particularly appropriate to case study evaluation conducted by one person. The first is to separate the role of the case worker conducting the study from the obligation to disseminate reports. Funds should also be built into the evaluation to ensure that these dissemination needs have a real possibility of being realized otherwise they, too, may become subject to the economic forces of a hostile sponsoring or subject group wishing to contain an evaluation report. The second

solution is to separate roles in case study policy evaluation and to build in two people, one the case study worker who conducts the evaluation, the other to act as consultant and case negotiator to resolve any conflicts which may arise.

Though the practice of involving a colleague in the case described to help resolve the dispute over dissemination was instinctive at the time, I would now argue that it is an essential part of evaluation practice in case study policy evaluation for several reasons:

- to check on the impartiality of accounts in cases of dispute;
- to safeguard the evaluator against co-option or collusion;
- to insulate the evaluator from the stress that an organization can exert to establish their viewpoint or suppress an evaluation;
- to ensure (and this is perhaps the most important point for this paper) that the evaluation is completed and the right to report to legitimate groups beyond the institution involved established and maintained.

In conclusion I would like to return to the central theme of the paper - the confluence of case study and policy evaluation - and make one general observation. In retrospect, the conflicts of power discussed here seem obvious enough and one might argue that they ought to have been foreseen in advance and steps taken such as those outlined which took account of the imbalance of power. For years now evaluation theorists have emphasized the political nature of evaluation and historically we have been reminded more than once that social science research has not only failed to be utilized in policy making but has

been used to support different, contrary political arguments but not necessarily policy suggested by the research. (See, for example, Abrams, 1976). With reference to Charles Booth's work on poverty, Philip Abrams commented that:

> 'its real lesson was that poverty was not a social science problem at all but a problem of politics. And that somewhere in between problems and policies there was a world of politics that science could not bridge'.

Evaluation may not be able to bridge that gap either but it is explicitly working within a political framework and aspires to influence policy. More and more, evaluators have to develop the skills of politics to ensure that the products of evaluation do influence policy or at least have the possibility of doing so. It has been assumed throughout this paper that a case study approach to evaluation can provide information relevant to informing policy reviews. To even approach that aspiration in highly politicized contexts the evaluator must adopt and maintain independence in the conduct and reporting of the study.

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2. The report, I should add, was a fifty-page issued-focussed narrative account of eleven issues identified by project personnel and managers as critical to the development of the project, but perhaps the crucial factor was that it covered a phase in the project characterized by administrative difficulties and tensions.

Evaluation Statement of Intent: E.E.C. Sponsored Pilot Project

Helen Simons

Statement I

I have been asked by the College to conduct an independent evaluation of the above Project for five terms. The evaluation has been commissioned by the local district to help fulfill the E.E.C. requirements for involvement in the Project and to guide future policy decisions. Since there are so many different parties involved - the E.E.C., the local district, the College, the Project, the schools, parents, teachers and pupils - and so many different styles of evaluation possible, I thought it would be useful at the outset to outline both my general approach to evaluation and to the evaluation of this project.

My general approach accords with the 'illuminative/responsive' school of evaluation. This approach is less concerned with identifying statistically significant differences in pre-specified variables (a pre-ordinate evaluation) and more concerned with responding to how the innovation develops and informing all the interested parties of the process and outcomes (a responsive evaluation). Such an aspiration is not likely to be met by relying on quantitative measurement of narrowly defined objectives. A more qualitative flow of information is needed which can reflect the complexity of the setting, the processes of development and any unanticipated outcomes of the innovation.

In the evaluation of this pilot project, which has broad aims and is constantly evolving, an informal and responsive approach is likely to be more useful for informing decisions than a formal evaluation of pupil outcomes against objectives. These are not in any case clearly defined; such an emphasis could distract us all from other possible effects. Techniques of data-gathering are likely to include interviews, observation, analysis of documents and discussion statements, rather than tests or questionnaires - though these are still within the scope of a responsive evaluation. Traditional designs - such as psychometric

testing, in a controlled experimental framework - are less appropriate, certainly during the formative stages of a pilot project.

The aim of the evaluation will be to present a portrayal of the innovation in action: to document the perspectives of the various parties involved in the setting up of the Project; to record the perceptions of participants - teachers, Project team, local district personnel and, where possible, parents; to describe the materials, methods and aims of the Project; and to identify issues which are critical to the development of the Project or a project of a similar kind in the future.

Given the small scale of the evaluation, selection within this general aim will be necessary. It will not be possible, for instance, to follow up all the aims listed in the Project outline nor all the questions and issues identified in the preliminary evaluation report. While an examination of the perceptions different groups have of the aims of the Project will form part of the evaluation it will not be the direct purpose to see whether or not these aims are being achieved. Far more important is to isolate the aims that are operating in practice within the context and resources - staffing and material - allocated to the Project.

Precise measurement of learning gains of pupils in linguistic competence is unlikely to be possible for several reasons: the availability of appropriate tests; the difficulty of establishing a baseline; my particular background. (I am not a linguist.) This does not mean that pupil outcomes will be ignored. Teachers keep their own records of pupil progress and these, with their permission, may form part of the evaluation. Also, an examination of the Project Director's annual report indicates linguistic analysis as a major interest and this may be an aspect of evaluation better carried out by him. In addition an attempt will be made to document the positive and negative effects both classroom and Project teachers observe of pupils involved in the Project.

It is difficult at this stage to indicate precisely what issues the evaluation will focus upon but given my background in evaluation of curriculum programmes in schools and local districts it is likely to centre on the problems and practice of implementing an experimental

programme. As the evaluation develops statements on key issues may be circulated for discussion.

Two reports are requested. These will be in narrative form. They may include analysis of major issues or problems, observations, excerpts from interviews, products of children's work material etc. - all information considered potentially useful for giving people insight into the nature of the Project in action.

Evaluation is about judgments of worth. But it is an open question as to how judgments are processed and whose judgment counts. The assumption taken in this evaluation is that it is not the role of the independent evaluation to judge the overall worth of the programme but to present the judgments of those involved in the Project in different ways, fairly and accurately.

PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted according to the principles of independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and consultation. The rationale for selecting these principles is briefly outlined before listing the specific procedures, based on these principles, which were followed in practice.

Independence

One purpose of evaluation of a publicly-funded project is to provide data to inform policy-making, another is to make the experience of the project accessible to different audiences - to all those who have a right to knowledge about the programme. The principle of independence is intended to safeguard the evaluation against the pressure of different interest groups and to ensure that the evaluation reports can be disseminated to all legimitate audiences. The major procedural problem is how to make evaluation information accessible to different groups without advocating the interests of any one.

Impartiality

The principle of impartiality is supportive to the principle of independence but is different from it. It requires the evaluation to check accounts for bias and to secure fair and 'objective' reporting.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is necessary to protect individuals from inappropriate use of information which is private to them. Rules of access and consultation give individuals opportunities to decide what to share, to reflect on what they have shared, to edit or comment upon their information in context: to control, in other words, the use of their own information.

Consultation

Consultation, as already indicated, is a complementary principle of the principle of confidentiality. It is important at three levels. First, access to evaluation information should be sought not assumed. Secondly, if personal

information (private facts or judgements) is given in confidence and that information proves relevant for the evaluation, the evaluator should consult with the person who gave the information to see if he/she will allow that information to go on public record. Thirdly, if information is not given in confidence (i.e. given with full permission for its use and therefore on public record) the evaluator should still try to allow the person opportunities to check that the information he/she offered has been used properly in context.

The balance between these principles is a delicate one. Ideally they complement and interact to produce an accurate, fair and relevant evaluation which respects both the privacy of individuals and the public's right to know. Different principles may assume priority at particular stages of the evaluation but they should not be used to contradict each other. Use of any one principle to the exclusion of another would be an improper use - against the canons of responsible evaluation. The principle of confidentiality, for instance, while necessary to protect an individual's right to control their own information, is not a restrictive principle for all data at all times. Some data is already on the public record; some data which exists should be part of the public record; some data needs to become part of the public record. The principle cannot legitimately be invoked to prevent relevant information being reported in a publicly funded project. Such an interpretation of the principle would effectively curtail the conduct of any independent evaluation and prohibit information pertinent to an understanding of the programme in action becomingpublicly accessible.

Because the balance required is a delicate one the procedures outlined below were rigorously followed in practice to protect individuals' rights to privacy, to give them the right of representation and to ensure accurate, fair and public reporting.

PROCEDURES

Independence

- No participants had privileged access to the data of the evaluation or the evaluation report (see Consultation).
- Decisions on circulation of the evaluation report were the responsibility of the evaluator, but the fullest consultation was entered into with participants prior to circulation (see Consultation).
- There was no secret reporting or leakage of information, i.e. reports or information about individuals of which they were not aware and which had not been negotiated for fairness, accuracy and relevance.
- Circulation of reports was restricted initially to those groups whom the report concerned; once information had been checked by participants and they had been given sufficient time to add or amend comments, the report was considered ready for circulation to other legitimate agents.
- No one individual or group had the right to limit the circulation of the total evaluation.
- No one individual or group had the right to control information which was public knowledge.

Impartiality

- No fact was included that did not have at least two data sources.
- Information was crosschecked for accuracy several times, with different people, with available documents and in meetings.
- The issues reported were those identified as central at the time by the majority of participants.
- The evaluator aspired to represent all views fairly; differences of view were regarded as data to be communicated, not matters on which the evaluator arbitrated.
- The evaluator adopted the role of documenting events and perceptions accurately and fairly.

- The evaluation is non-recommendatory, i.e. the evaluator does not recommend or prescribe what should happen on the basis of the events described. Data is presented to provide a range of perspectives on issues, to inform decisions, to raise options, and to draw attention to unconsidered phenomena. (This approach assures participants that their perspectives will be represented and those responsible for decision-making that their decisions will not be pre-empted.)
- The evaluator does not have a vested interest in the subject under investigation.
- The evaluator asked an evaluation colleague to check the report for evaluation bias. The colleague also adhered to the principle of confidentiality.

Confidentiality

- Interviews and informal conversations were confidential to the individual if requested.
- The evaluator did not use any information (oral or written) given to the evaluator in confidence without his/her consent.
- It was explained to individuals before the interview how the information would be used, viz. - that judgments and perspectives individuals wanted to keep private would be respected;
  - that individuals would have the opportunity to see the report and check the use of the information in context and to add any further comments they thought appropriate;
  - that if the evaluator wished to use specific quotations in the evaluation, permission would be sought from the individual;
  - that individuals would have an opportunity to reflect upon and check any other comments they made which formed part of the narrative on general issues;
  - that permission would not be sought from individuals for the use of information which did not identify them or which was already shared general knowledge.

- that the individual would have the opportunity to see and comment upon the report before circulation to other groups.

- Individuals had total control over information which was private to them and which they expressly asked to be kept in confidence.
- No one individual or group had the right to control information which was shared, i.e. not confidential to them only or which others cleared through the process of consultation.
- Respect for confidentiality was maintained: where a person said "Don't quote me" the quotation was not used; where a person said "Can you say that indirectly" the comment was rephrased; where a person said "Can you make that point in a general way" an attempt was made to do so.
- Where individuals are described pseudonyms or roles are used in the report. While this does not assure anonymity from those in the immediate environment, it decreases the probability of identification over time and distance.

Consultation

- Access to data sources was negotiated with those responsible. Data sources included heads, teachers, pupils, parents, local district personnel, project team, project records, school records and public statements, examples of pupils' work, teaching materials, etc. Where appropriate, permission for the use of information relevant to the evaluation from those data sources was also sought from the same individuals.
- Permission for the use of information given in confidence which proved relevant for the evaluation was sought from the individuals concerned.
- Interviews, discussions, group meetings, written statements were all potential data for the evaluation; but individuals had the opportunity to check the accuracy of the reportage, to correct or improve attributable interview statements and to suggest amendments.
- The evaluator negotiated aspects of the reports which concerned particular individuals with them on the criteria of fairness, accuracy and relevance.

- Key individuals who contributed to the evaluation and who were identifiable in the report, even in role, had the opportunity to comment on the sections which concerned them (checking specific attributable quotations and points of view) before the report was circulated to the group as a whole; numerous amendments were made by participants and these have been incorporated into the text.
- The same individuals had the further opportunity to comment on the issues when the report was released to the group as a whole. Comments were invited on the criteria of accuracy, fairness and relevance and an assurance given by the evaluator to amend the report in the light of these comments and to include any additional statements participants thought necessary. A fortnight was given initially, but this was extended to six weeks to allow more time for the preparation of a statement the local district indicated they wished to make. Two project teachers each made further comments which have been included in the text.
- The report was secondly disseminated to the other group of key individuals - head teachers - with the same invitation to comment on the criteria of fairness, accuracy and relevance and the same assurance to amend or include any additional comments. No comments were received.
- The report was then disseminated (via the head teachers) to the class teachers from whose classes pupils were withdrawn from the project and to the middle and upper school heads whose schools were involved in the project but who were not directly reported upon in the evaluation; and to two evaluation consultants and the College. The local district had decided by this stage not to make a response.
- One month later the report was disseminated to the European Community and their Comparative Evaluation Team.

Author's note: The next dissemination phase - to groups beyond the program and sponsors - was halted at this point as a dispute developed over control of dissemination. See paper: 'Case Studying Superordinates: The Power Politics of Policy Evaluation', page 12.